For the protection and welfare of emigrant workers, the Government has introduced the Pravasi Bhartiya Bima Yojana, 2006 w.e.f. 01.02.2006, a compulsory insurance scheme. Officers of the Indian Missions also visit labour camps from time to time to see that the living conditions are in conformity with the local labour laws. Efforts are also being made to enter into bi-lateral labour agreements with the countries in the Gulf region.

Implementation of Constitutional 73rd Amendment

2172. SHRI S.P.M. SYED KHAN: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether any remarkable achievement has been attained with regard to implementation of the Constitutional 73rd Amendment of 1992 by his Ministry since its creation;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the kind of steps that are being taken by his Ministry with regard to planning and implementation of programme of economic development and social justice through Panchayati Raj Institutions?

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) and (b) Ministry of Panchayati Raj has taken several initiatives ever since its inception in May, 2004 to implement Part IX of the Constitution in order that Panchayats emerge as self governing institutions. The mandatory provisions of Part IX regarding Panchayats relate to constitution, composition, elections and reservations. The rest of the provisions are enabling provisions and involve the discretion of the State Governments. Hence, the first achievement of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj has been to build a consensus around a set of 150 points of action during Seven Round Table Meetings of State Ministers of Panchayati Raj held between July and December, 2004. These points comprise time bound action plan for achieving full devolution of functions, funds and functionaries to Panchayati Raj Institution in accordance with the letter and spirit of Constitution. The implementation of this time-bound action plan calls for close co-ordination between the Government of India the States and the Union Territories as also between the Ministry of Panchayati Raj and the Ministries of the Government of India dealing

with the twenty nine functions that can be assigned to Panchayats under the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution of India.

Institutional mechanisms have been set up in the form of Council of Ministers of Panchayati Raj and Committee of Chief Secretaries and Secretaries of Panchayati Raj to review the progress in implementation of recommendations.

With a view to interacting with Panchayats and carrying out a review with the authorities concerned of the progress in implementing the points for action mutually agreed upon in the Round Tables, a process of visiting the States and UTs at the level of Union Minister of Panchayati Raj has also been initiated. The Minister has so far visited fourteen states and two UTs, namely, Karnataka, West Bengal, Uttaranchal, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Arunachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Goa, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala Chandigarh and Lakshdweep. Each visit is concluded with a Statement of Conclusions, highlighting the key points of action on which the State would move to operationalise the recommendations of the Round Tables.

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj under the directive of the Group of Ministers for strengthening Panchayati Raj, has been writing to the Central Ministries to carryout an activity mapping exercise delineating what is to be done at the Central, State/Panchayat level in respect of functional areas-of the Ministries and the Centrally Sponsored Schemes.

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj had entrusted the Indian Law Institute, formulation of appropriate amendments in the State Laws concerned with a view to assist the State Governments to harmonise the State laws with the provisions of Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 which applies to the nine States of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa and Rajasthan. The first report has been received from the Indian Law Institute (ILI) and circulated to States concerned for comments. During the meeting of the Empowered Sub Committee on Financial and Administrative empowerment of PRIs during its meeting held on 12.06.2006, the States were exhorted to complete the exercise to harmonise their State legislations with PESA within a period of three months. It was also recommended that implementation of the Tribal Sub Plan by State level nodal Departments should also follow an Activity Mapping exercise which assigned responsibilities to each level of Panchayat for the Tribal Sub Plan Programmes.

One of the goals set by the Government in the NCMP was to ensure that the funds going to the Panchayats are neither delayed nor diverted. In pursuance of this goal, a Committee in the Ministry of Panchayati Raj went into this issue in detail and submitted its report in May, 2005. Recommendations of this Committee have been put in to operation for transfer of Twelfth Finance Commission grants to PRIs from Consolidated Fund of the States to the Panchayats at the three levels.

(c) The Ministry of Panchayati Raj had set up Expert Group on Grass Roots Level Planning. The Group submitted its Report on 28.3.2006, which has been accepted by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj. Bases on the interim recommendations of the Expert Group, the Planning Commission issued a circular to the Planning Secretaries of the State Governments in October, 2005 in which the State Governments were advised to constitute District Planning Committees (DPCs) before their Annual Plan proposals could be considered. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj held a Workshop in collaboration with the National Institute of Public Finance & Policy (NIFP) on 8th - 9th May, 06 to operationalise the recommendations of the Report. The representatives of the Planning Commission and the State Government were invited to the Workshop. The joint conclusions of the Workshop included the provision of constitution of DPCs in State where are not constituted, in accordance with the provisions of Article 243 ZD of the Constitution, by 15th June 2006. States that did not have legal provisions in place for the constitution of DPCs. were requested to constitute these immediately through executive orders, pending the enactment of statutory provisions in this regard.

It was decided during the meeting of the Empowered Sub-Committee of National Development Council held on 12.6.2006 that the States should constitute District Planning Committees immediately by 15th July, 2006, or as soon as possible, in accordance with the provision of Article 243 ZD of the Constitution. Wherever States do not have appropriate legal backing in place for the constitution on DPCs, they may be constituted immediately through executive orders, pending the enactment of statutory provisions in this regard.

During the meeting of the Council of the Ministers in charge of Panchayati Raj held in Bhubaneshwar on 14-15 June, 2006, the State Governments were again exhorted to set up DPCs and to issue guideline for the operationalisation of DPCs.

The above decisions have been disseminated to the States. Letters have also been sent by Minister of Panchayati Raj on 19th April, 2006 and by the Deputy Chairman. Planning Commission, to the Chief Minister of States on 24th May, 06 to persuade the States to constitute DPCs and issue guidelines for preparation of plans by Panchayats and their consolidation through DPCs according to the Constitutional mandate.

Ministry of Panchayati Raj has also written to the Planning Commission to advise the Ministries concerned to modify the schemes guidelines of the schemes under Bharat Nirman to provide a role to Panchayats in accordance with the position agreed during the meeting of the Group of Secretaries on 01.03.2006.

Empowered Sub Committee on Financial and Administrative empowerment of, Panchayati Raj Institutions during its meeting on 12.06-2006 recommended that Central Ministries dealing with subject listed in the 11th Schedule must also create a Panchayat window in their respective budgets for those activities, which are entrusted to Panchayats. Ministries would also modify their guidelines to specifically list the activities to be entrusted to Panchayats. It was also recommended that Activity Mapping for flagship schemes as also for programmes under Bharat Nirman should be given priority.

Restriction in RTI Act

2173. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT:
SHRIMATI MAYA SINGH:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government has decided to restrict right to information in respect of its certain decisions;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the reasons therefor;

(d) whether it would result in bringing an end to the transparency and deprive the public to seek information about the working of Government; and

(e) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRI SURESH PACHOURI):